

News-Social Letter Action

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U.N. ASKED TO RECOGNIZE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

A petition asking recognition of the right of conscientious objection to military service has been presented to the Commission on Human Rights for inclusion in the proposed International Bill of Rights. The petition, sponsored by the War Resisters' International, was signed by 429 persons, including such names as Pearl S. Buck, Bishop Charles K. Gilbert, Arthur Garfield Hays, Charles H. Houston, J. B. S. Hardmann, Paul Hutchinson, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Aldous Huxley, Felix Morley, Kirby Page, Pierre van Paassen, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Bishop William Appleton Lawrence, Dr. Ernest Fremont Tittle, Roger Baldwin, Dr. Arthur E. Morgan, A. Philip Randolph, and others.

The text of the article suggested by the petitioners reads: "The right of the individual to refuse military service in obedience to conscience shall be recognized."

The petition sets forth that in the 17th century freedom of religious belief and worship was established; in the 18th century freedom of speech and of the press were recognized, and in the 19th the right of association in organized labor was won. The growth of resistance to military service that has taken place in the more democratic countries between the two wars, say the petitioners, is a factor in social and political evolution which cannot be ignored.

CHARGES ALCOHOLICS SWAMP VETERAN HOSPITALS

That thousands of ex-servicemen who drink excessively because they enjoy liquor, not because of physical or mental complications, are occupying beds in Veterans' Administration hospitals while 17,000 sick veterans are awaiting hospitalization, is charged by Ray Mitten in a special copyrighted communication to the *Indianapolis Times*, under date of November 24, 1947.

The article quotes Dr. Paul R. Hawley, VA medical director, that veterans' hospitals will treat about 10,000 alcoholics this year, two-thirds of whom are without demonstrable mental illness. All are classed as neuro-psychopathic cases. The great majority of the uncomplicated cases remain in the hospital only long enough to sober up. They then demand their release, which must be granted because they cannot be detained against their will.

The average cost of maintenance of such patients is \$8.50 per day each. The stay of this type of case runs from five to fifteen days, according to Dr. Hawley. The cost to American tax-payers for these uncomplicated cases (two-thirds of the estimated 10,000 admissions for 1947) runs \$62,750 per day. If we take the median stay—10 days—it is obvious that these alcoholics are costing the government—and the tax-payer—over \$600,000 per year. More important still—their presence in VA hospitals is keeping other veterans with service connected disabilities from badly needed treatment. And the number seems to be increasing. In 1945 there were 3,529; in 1946, 6,459, and in 1947 an estimated 10,000. A tragic factor in the situation is that the Veterans' Administration can do little for them. Those who are physically or mentally ill can be treated, but alcoholism itself requires a therapy beyond medical skill.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The power of the General Assembly of the United Nations lies exclusively in its operation as a world public forum in which the claims of truth and justice operate through the procedures of open discussion and free agreement. The charter of the UN gives to the Security Council the sole power of applying sanctions of any kind of physical force.

It is notable that the Security Council has been almost totally paralyzed, unable to reach any significant decision. This is due, formally, to the "veto" or, more properly, "the principle of unanimity," which prevails in the Council. But the real reason for the existence of this principle is that no one of the principal powers is willing to abridge its so-called right to decide when and how force is to be applied by and upon it.

This dead-lock in the Security Council and the sharpened conflict between the USA and the USSR had given rise to many predictions that the second meeting of the General Assembly would be unable to make any significant progress. Fortunately, this prediction proved to be entirely erroneous. The power of public opinion was notably demonstrated in many of the decisions of this Assembly.

EARLIER SUCCESSES OF THE UN

While the UN was aborning in San Francisco a very important instance of this type of open diplomacy and the impact of the conscience of the world through international organization appeared. It occurred in the case of the dispute of France with Lebanon and Syria. France, which had ruled these territories under a mandate of the Allies since World War I, had stated that they were to have their independence. At the end of World War II this pledge had not yet been fulfilled and France apparently suffered a change of mind in the matter. In June 1945 military operations were being carried on in Syria and Lebanon. This was made a kind of case-study by many of the delegates to San Francisco. The result was that both France and Britain, who had intervened in the matter, promptly withdrew their forces, and the promise of independence was realized.

A second instance occurred when Russia over-stayed her welcome in Iran. The Iranian government put the case before the United Nations where the facts were made public and the conscience of humanity was appealed to. Russia withdrew, although she could have vetoed any effort to apply international sanctions upon her.

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I am deeply concerned with the state of mind at times bordering on hysteria that ascribes to our former ally, the Soviet Republic, all the ills and errors which two world wars have brought. No country has suffered more from wars of our generation than have the Russian people. And suffering people are not always reasonable people. The Soviets are not the first or the only people who have thought that suffering gives the right to make others suffer.

Hon. James F. Byrnes,
Winston-Salem, N.C., Nov. 5, 1947

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SUPREME COURT HANDS DOWN FAR-REACHING DECISION

James A. Crain

The Supreme Court of the United States on December 8, handed down a decision which will unquestionably change the pattern of the administration of criminal justice in many sections of the country. The Court reversed and remanded the death sentence of a Meridian, Mississippi, Negro, one Eddie "Buster" Patton, convicted of killing a white man. Patton was indicted by an all-white grand jury and was convicted by an all-white petit jury. Attorneys for Patton filed an appeal on the ground that "Negroes were systematically excluded from service on the grand jury and the petit jury simply because they were Negroes." The Mississippi Supreme Court rejected the appeal and confirmed the conviction, claiming that there were only 25 qualified male Negro electors in Lauderdale County (the scene of the crime), and that therefore the probability that the name of a Negro would be drawn for jury service was something like 400 to 1.

In overruling the Mississippi high court, the U. S. Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, with Associate Justice Hugo Black writing the opinion, declared that the state's claim that Negroes had not served on juries in Mississippi for more than 30 years was irrelevant to the issue. "The omission," said the Court, "seriously detracts from the weight and respect that we would otherwise give to its conclusion in reviewing the facts . . . The statement of the Mississippi supreme court illustrates the unwisdom of attempting to disprove racial discrimination in the selection of jurors by percentage calculations applied to the composition of a single venire . . . When a jury selection plan, whatever it is, operates in such a way as always to result in the complete and long-continued exclusion of any representative at all from a large group of Negroes, or any other racial group, indictments and verdicts returned against them cannot stand . . . our holding does not mean that a guilty defendant must go free. For indictments can be returned and convictions can be obtained by juries selected as the constitution demands."

Under the terms of this decision no state can henceforth exclude qualified members of minority groups from jury service and at the same time expect convictions of members of these groups to stand the test of appeal. It is not necessary that a member of the minority group serve on the trial jury which convicts the defendant. It is necessary that qualified members of minority groups be on the jury lists and that they be allowed to serve when their names are drawn. This decision of the Supreme Court will go a long way toward granting to minority groups in the U. S. a most important right—equality before the law. As such it must be hailed by all freedom-loving Americans.

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WASHINGTON ROUND-UP

Robert A. Fangmeier

¶ The Stratton Bill (H.R. 2910) to admit one-hundred thousand Displaced Persons a year for four years has only an outside chance of passing during this session of Congress. Hearings have been held by the Immigration Sub-committee of the House Judiciary Committee but no report has been made to the full committee or the whole House. It is generally believed, however, that the House Committee will postpone its recommendation until after a report by the Senate Judiciary Committee sometime in January. Observers feel that the Senate Committee will give the bill a favorable, but unenthusiastic endorsement. After the Senate recommendation the House Committee is expected to send its bill to the House floor.

President Truman's endorsement of the Stratton Bill, plus the withdrawal of the American Legion from among those groups opposing it, would seem to remove the major barriers to the passage of H.R. 2910. However, the Citizens' Committee for Displaced Persons, reports a lethargy among the bill's supporters that makes its passage far from certain. Only major organizations opposing the bill are the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. The V.F.W., however, appears to be in process of changing its position much like the American Legion and like the Legion may endorse the principle of admitting some D.P.'s without actually endorsing the situation but lack of active support plus the rush of business may find Congress adjourning without enacting this legislation.

¶ The Bender Bill (H.R. 29) to abolish the Poll Tax passed House of Representatives in the first session of the Eightieth Congress. The bill now goes to the Senate where Republican leaders and northern Democrats have promised to make an all out fight to break the usual filibuster of Southern Senators and secure passage of the bill. Senator Homer Ferguson of Michigan, floorleader of the bill, and Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, are behind this movement, and have promised to bring H.R. 29 to the Senate floor in February or March several months before adjournment. Filibusters are most effective late in a session when the Senators are anxious to pass other vital legislation. Supporters of the Bender Bill believe that they have the necessary two-thirds majority in the Senate to invoke cloture which will stop the anticipated southern filibuster.

The vote on cloture (stopping date) is the key vote and Senators are reluctant to invoke this rule . . . Senators not yet committed on the cloture vote and who might like to hear from their constituents are, George A. Wilson and Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa, Clyde M. Reed of Kansas, John S. Cooper of Kentucky, Milton R. Young of North Dakota, Harlan J. Bushfield of South Dakota, Arthur V. Watkins of Utah, William E. Jenner of Indiana, Edward Martin of Pennsylvania, John Bricker of Ohio and C. Wayland Brooks of Illinois.

You can secure a copy of H.R. 29 from your Congressman. Write your senator concerning it by addressing him, care of the Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C.

¶ The legislation to establish a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission (S. 984) was introduced in the first session of the Eightieth Congress by Senator Irving M. Ives of New York and seven other Senators. An identical bill H.R. 2824 has been introduced in the House by Representative James G. Fulton of Pennsylvania. The Senate Labor Committee is expected to report on the FEPC bill late in January or early in February. Senator Taft, chairman of the committee, is not supporting the bill, but will

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ON SOCIAL FRONTIERS

FREEDOM'S BLACK-OUT. From time to time the editors of *Social Action News-Letter* raise a question in their own minds as to the appropriateness of the title of this column. Just about that time something happens to remind us that we are still on the frontiers of social democracy and that pioneering is still called for. The latest instance is the report that the Freedom Train has, or will, pass up both Memphis, Tennessee, and Hattiesburg, Mississippi, because the mayors of these communities ruled that Negroes and whites be segregated when they view the historic documents on which our freedom is founded. Evidently the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights cannot be exhibited in Memphis and Hattiesburg except under conditions that deny the very things for which they stand. Since the Freedom Train is a project of a private, voluntary agency and not a project of the federal government, those in charge could do nothing but bow to the orders of these municipal dictators or cancel the visit. Their decision to cancel was a merited rebuke to bigotry. One does wish, however, that the citizens of these two communities might have an opportunity to look upon these great documents which mean so much to human liberty. Perhaps it would have made them ashamed.

* * *

A SYMBOL OF DEMOCRACY. In the dark days of the war in 1942, a 10,500-ton American merchant ship, the "Booker T. Washington," sailed out of New York harbor under the command of a Negro skipper, Captain Hugh Mulzac. This was the first American vessel ever to put to sea under the command of a Negro captain. The war record of the "Booker T. Washington" justified the government's confidence in Captain Mulzac and his crew of white and Negro Americans, Britons, Danes, Norwegians, Belgians, Irish and Filipinos. As a troop transport the vessel carried 14,000 men overseas without mishap. She was credited with shooting down two enemy planes. Since the war's end the vessel has been engaged in transporting cargoes of relief coal to Europe. Last September Captain Mulzac relinquished his command to another Negro skipper, Captain James H. Brown, to enter a hospital for treatment. The other day at Brooklyn the "Booker T's" tattered flag was hauled down by her crew of 38 and the ship was decommissioned to join the Navy's reserve fleet. Commented Captain Brown, "We wanted to keep operating as a symbol of democracy." That symbol is badly needed in our world today.

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HOW MUCH IS A MAN WORTH MORE . . .? Jesus once asked, "How much, then, is a man of more value than a sheep?" By this question he put human personality over against all other forms of life and property. City Councilman John A. White answers insofar as the city of Atlanta, Georgia, is concerned. And his answer is an indictment of that famous Southern city. Says Councilman White, one hundred animals at the Grant Park Zoo live better than 162,000 Atlantans who inhabit the city's slums and substandard dwellings, so far as shelter is concerned. Since Mr. White is chairman of a special slum clearance committee and author of a five-year program to eliminate 40,000 slum and substandard housing units, he ought to know what he is talking about. "We all favor sanitary conditions for the animals," he says, "but some people are placing the welfare of one hundred animals above the welfare of people who live in more unsanitary surroundings than the Zoo animals. There is no disease, no crime, no delinquency, and no fire hazard at Grant Park Zoo. The Zoo is fireproof. But we cannot say this about the . . . substandard structures, many of which are not fit for occupancy by animals, much less humans."

ECHOES FROM UN SEMINAR

One hundred and seven Disciple leaders spent November 3 to 6 in a Seminar on World Order at the United Nations headquarters under the direction of the Department of Social Welfare. Numerous letters from the delegates have been received expressing their reactions and something of the results of this conference.

"It was a unique experience and one which will be of value in many ways for a long time to come."—Kenneth M. Hay, McKinney, Texas.

"This experience was one of the most vital in which I have ever been privileged to share. You and your department have rendered a service . . . that can scarcely be measured."—Leonard W. Boynton, Richmond, Virginia.

"It was truly one of the greatest weeks I have ever spent . . . I spent the sermon period last Sunday giving my impressions of the seminar and we have had requests to set up a study group in our church . . . I have four outside addresses that will deal with our seminar."—Robert H. Taylor, Warren, Ohio.

"To me the tone of enthusiasm and confidence, at least of devotion to the work of the United Nations organization itself, on the part of the personnel was most worth while."—Luella M. Crewdson (Mrs. Ida D.), Little Rock.

"I have made six special talks already and it looks like I will probably be invited to a dozen more meetings to give my impressions of the U.N. Many of the ministers here in our city seem to have a growing respect for our Brotherhood and especially your department for initiating such a Seminar."—Frank L. Stuck, Lakeland, Florida.

"My sincere appreciation . . . for the unusual privilege . . . the greatest experience I have had since Leicester, England, in 1935."—John F. Norman, Galesburg, Illinois.

"Your department has led the way in a field of endeavor that needs to be followed up with great interest and purpose . . . I have made five addresses and am scheduled for seven others."—Kenneth M. Hooe, Rock Island, Illinois.

"We had three evenings of it and averaged over four hundred people at the meetings. I was asked to present the lectures to the public and I did for three other evenings, broadcasting them each time. I have spoken twelve other times . . . and have six more addresses to give."—Frank A. Rose, Danville, Kentucky.

"Set aside room on second floor of church and call it 'United Nations' Room' . . . The fourteen charts are around the wall . . . Have addressed nine groups and have four more engagements."—John F. Nelson, Clarksburg, West Virginia.

"It was indeed a great revelation."—G. Curtis Jones, Richmond, Virginia.

"I count it one of the very highest experiences that I have had . . . I have spoken on nine different occasions . . . Other dates are yet to be filled."—Lowell C. Bryant, Lincoln, Nebraska.

RACE RELATIONS STUDY

Following the practice of a quarter of a century the churches of America will observe Race Relations Sunday on February 8, 1948. This annual celebration of the Christian affirmation of the universal Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man has done much to keep before Christians the vision of the Kingdom of God, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus.

The Department of Social Welfare has distributed to all ministers, superintendents of church schools, women in state and district offices of leadership, youth leaders, and to the state secretaries and directors of religious education worship and study materials available for planning appropriate programs on this day.

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A third issue presents a somewhat different situation. The 1946 General Assembly asked the Union of South Africa, which was holding South West Africa under an old mandate, to place its administration under the International Trusteeship System of the UN. At the first Assembly the Union had not only indicated its intention not to do so but also had made clear its desire to annex the mandated territory. When the 1947 Assembly met, it was revealed that the Union had failed to follow the will of the 1946 Assembly. Some progress was noticeable, however, for the Union announced that it had decided not to annex the territory but would continue to administer it "in the spirit" of the old mandate, thus maintaining the status quo.

This proposition met with very severe criticism in the second Assembly. And although taking great precautions not to seem to lay down an ultimatum to the Union, the Assembly re-affirmed its will that the Union Government "propose for the consideration of the General Assembly a Trusteeship agreement for the territory of South West Africa," and expressed the hope that it would comply in time for it to be acted upon by the third Assembly in 1948. It will be very interesting to observe the action of this colonial state in response to the request of the Assembly.

CRUCIAL POLITICAL ISSUES DECIDED

Perhaps the most critical action of the recent Assembly was that regarding Palestine. A special session of the Assembly had met at the request of Britain from April 28 to May 15 to consider this question, at which time a special UN committee on Palestine was set up to study and make recommendations to the regular Assembly. The minority report of this committee urged a federal state to comprise an Arab and a Jewish state with Jerusalem as its capital with local self-government accorded each under a federal constitution to be jointly drafted. The Assembly adopted the essential features of the majority report, however, to partition this distraught land into separate Arab and Jewish states with Jerusalem to be held under UN Trusteeship Council perpetually.

The Arabs resisted this decision and have announced that they will resist the implementation of it, the Jews accepting reluctantly. The successful execution of this very precarious and in many respects unhappy political compromise remains to the future. But the fact that the USSR and the USA agreed upon it gives considerable promise.

On three other actions of the Assembly there was a regrettable lack of agreement between these two most powerful states. The Assembly, over Russian opposition, set up a special committee on Greece to observe continuously the developments within Greece and the relations with her neighbors, Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Also over Russian protests the Temporary Commission on Korea was established to guide the establishment of a provisional government, including supervision of elections looking to independence, and to oversee the withdrawal of occupying troops. Russia announced that she will not allow the Commission to operate in northern Korea now occupied by the USSR. She had proposed instead of the resolution adopted that both the USA and USSR simultaneously withdraw their troops and allow the Koreans to set up their own government without outside interference.

A third matter on which the Assembly overrode vigorous Russian objection concerned the "Little Assembly," or what is officially called the Interim Committee. This committee, which is to be constituted by one representative of each member state, is to be in session continuously. It can consider only such matters as the Assembly refers to it, preparing data and recommendations which it can bring to the Assembly itself. The committee is established for one

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not oppose it either. He might even vote for it, if certain provisions, in his own FEPC bill, are added.

¶ Senate Bill 1813 would reduce postage cost of relief shipments to war torn areas, about fifty per cent. The Committee on Civil Service of the Senate will report this bill to the Senate in January and there is little doubt that it will pass. Congressmen have been receiving a great many letters from constituents protesting the high cost of shipping food and clothing to Europe and S. 1813 is the result.

¶ If Senate Joint Resolution 166 is passed Finnish Students will be allowed to study in the United States. The resolution provides that the money received by the United States from Finland on that country's World War I debt shall be applied towards scholarships for its citizens.

¶ The European Recovery program will be the most important legislation before Congress in January and debate will commence on the President's request as soon as the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Senate and House have made their recommendations. Just before the Christmas recess the President submitted his plan for European Recovery in which he requested \$6,800,000,000 for a 15-month period starting April 1, 1948. He estimated that the four year program might cost as much as 17 billion. He suggested that a new government agency administer this program and be headed by an Economic Cooperation Administrator. This is apparently a concession to Republican leaders who have been demanding that future relief and rehabilitation efforts be divorced from the State Department. However, the President's proposal would still give the State Department control over that part of the program dealing with foreign policy.

year only and its continuance will be up for decision at the third meeting of the Assembly. Russia and the Soviet bloc of states have declared they will boycott the committee, on the alleged grounds that it is in violation of the charter, in that it is a separate organ not authorized and that it is intended as a subterfuge for annulling the principle of the veto.

THE VETO CRITICIZED

The first issue referred to the Little Assembly was the question of the veto, especially to consider the proposals for modification of the veto made to the 1947 Assembly by Argentina to call a General Conference—as provided by the charter—to consider revision of the charter, and by China to revise the procedure so as to affect modification of the veto but without charter amendment. The Soviet bloc constituted the minority of opposing votes while 11 other states abstained. The first Assembly had urged the Security Council, in which alone the principle of unanimity of the great powers operates, to alter its procedures so as to make possible prompt and effective exercise of its functions.

These are by no means all of the fruitful actions of the second Assembly. And perhaps they are not even the most important, although they have to do with the more sensitive points of friction in the world. It is quite possible that history will give the greater importance to decisions reached in such matters as the universal rights of workers to form free trade unions, procedures to codify international law with special reference to the rights and duties of states, the drafting of a convention against "genocide" to make the deliberate destruction of any people on the basis of their racial, religious, national, or other ethnic character an international crime, and its rebuke to all peoples and states who engage in propaganda intended to incite hostility or acts of war.

The third session of the Assembly will be held in Europe at some point not yet decided.